

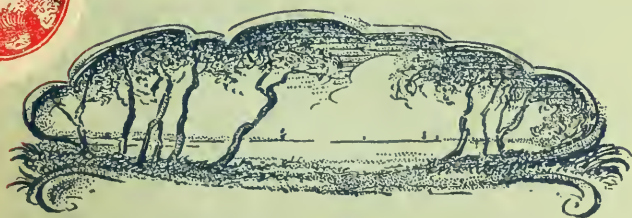
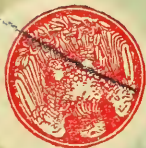
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# HORIZONS



ROBERT ALDEN SANBORN



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# Horizons

BY

ROBERT ALDEN SANBORN



BOSTON

THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY

1916

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MAR 22 1918

THE FOUR SEAS PRESS  
BOSTON AND NORWOOD

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no 1

## CONTENTS

	Page
THE DESERTED BALLROOM	7
✓ IN A CHILD-GARDEN	11
THE SUFFRAGETTE	16
THE NUPTIALS OF LEO FRANK	19
✓ SOUL OF THE LOTUS	21
DEMOCAUST	23
MEMORIAL DAY IN THE DESERT	25
✓ THE WIND	27
✓ TO A CHILD FALLING ASLEEP	28
THE CROWD	31
THE LAUGHTER OF THE WORLD	33
✓ THE PINE-TREE	34
SIN	35
WAR	37
A MEMORY	39
WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN TOGETHER	40
TO BETTY IN A BLUE FROCK	41
LENTO	42
✓ THE CHILD SEEN FROM A WINDOW	43
A WINTER-WALK WITH BARBY	44
TO BOBBY, BEING SEVEN	46
THE WATER-FRONT	47
A CHRISTMAS TOAST	48
TO ONE IN DEATH	50
THE SNAKE PASSES	51
✓ MOON'S SONG	52
MY SELF	53
DUST TO DUST	55
TO A MASTER MARINER	56
A WARNING FROM THE HEART	57
THE VISION OF ONE WHO DOUBTED	58
MAUVE	63

THE COVER DRAWING IS BY ELIHU VEDDER



TO MY MOTHER

CRITIC-EXTRAORDINARY AND FRIEND-SUPREME



## THE DESERTED BALLROOM

### I.

The dancers all have gone,  
Leaving their souls behind them;  
Pallid and frail their souls,  
With not a fleeting foot to mind them;  
Their souls are not their own.

Wearing their fleshly wraps,  
They have returned to the prose  
Of the sandy shore,  
Robed in the rags of dancers long before.  
And still,  
But never still,  
The lyric water of the ballroom floor  
Laps the firm prose of the sand,  
And ever laps.

The sea is still;  
Only the rhythm of the waltz,  
Sprinkled in waves upon the starlit space,  
Lingers like dropped petals of the dancers' grace.  
The sea is mirror of the will  
To paint the laugh of pleasure  
Forever on the face.

## II.

My breath faints upon my lips.  
For forth from the untenanted night  
One cometh wandering in a dream,  
Holding aloft a taper whose wan flame skips  
On the faded rhythm of the ballroom floor;  
Some sated dancer in a plight  
Of loss, spreading a ghostly gleam.  
There is no tide of music, is it to dance once more  
She brings her light?

The sea, how still.  
The moon, how very pale.  
Is it without avail  
Her beams drip from the eaten candle, spill  
Gouts of warm gold upon the sable floor?

*Who passed in sobbing haste from prose of sand  
To descend upon the sea that echoes with the dance?*

*A splash of welcome in the glance  
Of feeble rays descending;  
And a clasp of mortal hand  
With spirit, in a hope unending.*

The waxen moon confers a lure that glozes  
The prose of sandy shore, and closes  
The reaching gap from satiate dancer to his soul.  
She comes with pity of forbidden light  
In which to find again his loosened aureole.

### III.

There is a lustral peace abiding  
In the moon upon the sea ;  
There is no lost soul hiding  
In hope bereft of Thee,  
O august Beauty !

Dropped cadences on the water mutter,  
And hush like fragrances in a deserted hall  
Where the last dancer closed the door.  
No more tonight does the candle gutter,  
And stain the ballroom floor.  
In the blue moon's sleep forgotten souls are gathered  
to the shore,  
Its prose melted in the rhythmic fall  
Of crescendoing light.  
Ended in dream the wasted dancer's plight.

And yet I hesitate to sleep ;  
For does not the revealing Goddess keep  
The sanctity of pleasure,  
And Artemis in her might  
Bestow the boon of Beauty on our fevered measure?  
In the blinding nakedness of silence,  
Over Poseidon's floor,  
On this sea of failed emotion,  
Is there not more  
The freed spirit of the dance  
When spent is the last forlorn devotion?

Grey prose of sand and shore  
Is to blue magic dedicated ;  
And when, the fever of the quest abated,  
The body shakes its tattered clothes  
Upon the floor,  
Do we not pass from beauty simulated  
To the one Beauty that is more ?

## IN A CHILD-GARDEN

### I.

They are happy there,  
The Children I love,  
For there they are raised above  
The sedulous air  
Of home, and two—too many—parents.  
For parents are a fussy folk;  
It is either a cloak  
Too much or not enough;  
And their ways are rough,  
Chafed by crossing edges,—  
The will to be too kind,  
The will to keep their pledges  
To a Lord they do not understand.  
But here He who loved Children rules.  
They call such places “schools”,  
(And fish who swim together).  
They might as well call weather  
The ten commandments,  
And make a moral code of prankish elements,  
As call this place a “school”.  
They might as aptly wield a ferule  
Over a swarm of quivering flowers,  
Trembling not with fear of Spartan hours,  
But with laughter and with love, scattered by the  
showers.  
If this place is a “school”,  
Then everyone’s a fool

Who goes to any other.  
There is a mother,  
But no father,—  
A woman who is not a mother,  
Since a father is not indispensable  
To Motherhood.  
And the Children all are hers, her brood.  
She is responsible  
But to the love of Him who best loved Childhood.

## II.

I had come from very far.  
Was it one life,  
Was it many I had dipped in,  
Flagging on my pinions?  
I do not know how many lives there are  
Between the strife of my outsetting,  
From primordial forgetting  
To these nursery dominions,  
Where the gilt of many a star  
Glints among the happy toys  
Tumbled by the girls and boys.  
I only know at last I reached a house,  
Plain outside where the plumed trees waited;  
That a soul-tall woman, gaited  
More like bird whose wings were clipped  
Than one who never had the wings to rouse,  
Opened wide a door through which I stepped;  
That we endlessly conversed, mated  
All our many lives together



In transfusing understanding,  
That as she rose I felt each feather  
Of the wings I little used,  
Pricked with mutinous demanding  
That the time to soar was near;  
Then through parted doors I saw them,  
Four,—three boys, and then, a girl.

What I saw was four small Children  
On the shore of many worlds;  
What I could not see was more  
Than I'd ever seen before,  
World on world, a terraced hill  
Of castled worlds,  
Piled with pearly roof and turret,  
Capping one another like a clownish hatter's head,  
Wearing all his stock.  
And underneath this towering crest of profuse crea-  
tion,  
The rhythmic breathing of their talk,  
Ebbing, falling on the shore...

Three boys, and then—  
A girl,  
Floating in the play's still lake,  
Playing with the Pearl of fun,  
Playing in the valley,  
In whose downy lap would break,  
Fall with clattering confusion,  
All the bubbled worlds' profusion,

Harmlessly upon their heads  
Would break and break and break.

III.

I am what their love conjures forth,  
I am not loath  
To be anyone their tendrils seek to climb on.  
If it is a father-post, that I will be ;  
A brother, or shy lover, I am he ;  
And if a piper pied they see,  
Or a grave angel draped in blue,  
I'm sure if I gazed in a glass I'd see him too.  
For their eyes are magic pools wherein a star  
Sits on the brow of everyone who looks within ;  
And on the brink  
One does not choose to think  
But just to feel their breath and be  
Born their fancies' avatar.

IV.

And when I go to them,  
They flock to me and cling  
Like anemones, bursting  
Out of secret shadows of the earth,  
To the wonderment of the stiff tall tree  
Whose roots feel the tickling  
Of their sudden mirth ;  
Whose leaves giggle with glee  
As do the lips and eyes of me

When the tinted faces of these Child-blossoms,  
Out of my common-places,  
Break in breath-arresting birth.

V.

Through the netted roses  
Fat-cheeked peonies  
Wakeful in their bed,  
Talk in scented whisper,  
Scented like the roses ;  
While overhead  
The sleeping breath of Children  
Scents an inner garden,  
Sweeter than the near one  
Where the flowers are.

On the black pinnacle  
Of the cedar-tree  
Hangs a golden honey-bee  
Heavy with sweet light ;  
Heavy with the plunder of a full-blown sun  
Closed in the garden of the night.  
Only for a moment clings the robber-bee moon  
To the peak of the tree,  
Then toils on lazy wings  
Through star-tangles up the sky,  
And murmurously sings  
Upon its sagging flight.  
There is so much to be said  
When the Children are in bed ;  
So much to be idly said in the drowsy moony night.

## THE SUFFRAGETTE

She never married:  
She was importunate  
To pluck the thorn of lightning out of sex,  
And so she tarried,  
And would not let perplex  
Her view of fate  
The small weak piping call of mate to mate.

Her eyes she fashioned  
Into an open stare  
Like to a Grecian marble;  
She looked the Cyprian who passioned them  
To wobble  
From the bee-straight line of duty,  
And peer wistfully at others' happiness,  
Square in the face.  
Her heart was there with beauty  
Of the common race,  
And there she left it.

Yet heartless she was not,  
Except toward foolish private games and  
semblances;  
She loved the dances,  
But for the dancers scorn in her was hot;  
She loved them, too, but thought  
The weave of their light passions and frail trances  
At too great cost of blindness to the dealer's tricks  
Was bought.

So much of her,  
Her oceanic force,  
Went to denying  
Her own heart's teasing, crying,  
And to divorce  
The waste insatiate flames of self  
From mortal habits,  
Saving, diverting them as rabbits  
From the traps,  
I wondered she could stand the stinging raps  
Of pattering indifference,  
Until I saw  
Her virtue was compounded all of lean endurance.

I heard her say,  
At bay :  
Man is a colossus, striding,  
With one foot mired deep in pleasure,  
The other stamping his outrageous yoke  
Upon our love, our treasure.  
And this he calls his "joke";  
Expecting us to laugh with him in his deriding  
The rights (ha ! ha) of woman.  
And there he sticks, the oaf,  
Refusing to retreat or go on ;  
Braying : Better half a loaf  
With me  
Than none. But shall we, fellow-women, not agree :  
Better an independent death  
By wan starvation,

Than by asphyxiation  
In our own thwarted breath?

She never married,  
And for her stark atonement, Life  
Drove through her palms and side the lightning  
    thorns,  
Because she tarried.

## THE NUPTIALS OF LEO FRANK

He could not hide, for they had kept him  
Where they could find him.  
He had no follower who would deny he knew him,  
But every man a Judas kiss had for him.

How different with them;  
Who went at night, with even night shut from them  
By goggled trappings that pent up their vileness in  
them.  
The cock might crow till Justice died but no one knew  
them.

He, the uplifted bridegroom, (Justice loved him)  
To that ghastly dance of Hymen they led him.  
They could not see, for goggled eyes, his Goddess wed  
him;  
The light they hid from was alone for him.

They had their way, that much was vouchsafed them;  
The poor sick body danced a step or two to glut them;  
A drift of dust shaken off his soul fell on them;  
They were alone, fearing the kindly light that could not  
find them.

He was no Ulysses, his rival suitors were too much for  
him;  
The twenty-five pure lovers of grave Justice tricked  
him.

But when they had (they thought) disposed of him,  
Justice refused their stifling secrecy and ran on  
streams of light to him.

Happy with his immortal bride he bends to them,  
Pitying, knowing that the break of dawn to them  
Must be a cruel torture to the eyes of them,—  
They who deny the light and wrap their night about  
them.



## SOUL OF THE LOTUS

[To Hasegawa]

## I

A white lamp,  
                    hanging—  
In its mouth a pink pearl  
                    of flame—  
Swinging  
                by three strands of light...  
A pool beneath,  
Quaint and secret as mud...

## II

Animate,  
Winged for escape  
To the cupped hand of night  
Scooping pink and green stars  
Out of unknown abysses,  
The lotus—

*But there's the stem hinting,  
Tale-telling of some old connection,  
Some scandal forgotten  
In the past of the taciturn mud;  
Over whose face—*

*Or is it a face  
Under the mask of cool water?*

The lotus

                  looks and fades upward,  
Tirelessly murmuring,  
Politely concealing impatience,  
Like a lady reminding a dolt :  
“Please, you have caught in the door  
A slip of my skirt ;  
Let me loose,  
I must go.”

## DEMOCAUST

Whose are the hands that are warmed  
At the red hearth of war?  
And who sit crouched in the smoke  
Of the earth where youth is ablaze?

There's a crackle, a snapping,  
In the little green valley,  
On the lip of the river,  
From the green-shuttered belfry;  
And amongst the purple sweet clusters  
Hid in the leaves of the vineyard,  
Jagged fangs are spurting  
And maiming the air.  
The warm fumes of blood  
Exhale from the meadow,  
The sleek grasses are red as the embers,  
And hot are the flowers with the splashed life of men.  
There's a hiss of escaping breath  
From the brands on the hearth that are dying;  
Earth steams with war fire,  
And whose hands are warmed?

*Our fingers are chill  
With the numbness of death;  
And the coals that would warm them  
Have yielded their flame—  
Our lads lying wan on the meadow.*

Whose hands are outspread  
To the burning of hearts  
On the stones of the earth,  
Where the star of the young of a people  
Has burst into wrath;  
And the cinders are smothering  
The mouths of the roses,  
And the white-breathing lilies;  
And choked is the peace of the brook  
With grey corpses;  
And the soul of the star of the young,  
'The light of its shining,  
Shimmers hot on the wheat—  
For a breath—  
Then is gone, and the ripe grasses shiver  
With the dew of the nightfall of death?  
Youth's green limbs are ashes,  
Their quick sap is spent.  
By whose hands was this kindled?  
Whose blood does it warm?

*Our hearthstones are cold.  
We have fed our young blood  
To the red fires of war,  
And the ashes fall dead—  
Our lads that lie white on the meadow.*

## MEMORIAL DAY IN THE DESERT

I have done a good deed today,  
I have made the flag happy,  
Our flag, the flowing waves of red and white,  
With the patch of starry heaven in the corner above.  
For I remembered that this was our soldiers' day,  
Ours, who went before us,  
And plunged unafraid into the flame-riven battle  
gloom.  
And I, remembering that this day was theirs,  
Unfolded the precious bunting, lovingly wound about  
the rafter,  
And I hoisted a pole above my roof-tree,  
And I swung the beloved flag to the peak.  
Dancing in her gladness, in the exultation of freedom,  
She soared like a mating swallow up to her lover, the  
wind,  
Who seized her in mad abandon,  
And off they went together in fluent ripples,  
In undulations of sweetest motion.

Yes, the sleeping flag awoke and lived,  
Feeling the kisses of her far-flying lover,  
Who came from beyond the ends of earth;  
Who had borne his sweetheart drooping with the ter-  
rors of love,  
Over bleeding regiments of men;  
And had held her stark in maddening embraces  
High above the smoking ramparts,

And the iron tubes of War's red thunderbolts  
That lay menacing beneath.

All that the flag had lived before  
It has lived through this day ;  
Here on the blank sun-smitten slope,  
Far from the haunted battle-fields.  
For filled with the immemorial love of the wind spirit,  
It lives for all time and beyond all time,  
Before the world, and after.

## THE WIND

He is the shepherd of the snow,  
Whipping his flock from stellar spaces  
In wild tumultuous races  
To pastured rest upon the earth below.  
From the rose-flushed West he comes ;  
And, heavy as a bee, with kisses  
From the honeyed mouth  
Of the slumbering South,  
He lazies over tides and spills them to the fishes ;  
Or, sounding glacial drums,  
Ice-metalled like a Goth he marches forth  
From Hyperborean mountains on the frontiers of the  
North ;  
And he is Neptune's priest  
Who swings the surging chorus of the sea  
To where the earth on bended knee  
Bows to the dawn-doors of the templed East.  
From all the quarters four  
That verge upon the suppliant earth,  
His cleansing currents pour,  
Charged with a gusty mirth.  
Cloud-petals swirl and maze the stars,  
Sea-horses fling themselves upon the shore  
And all their foamy life in broken bubbles yield,  
When he is loosed, and perturbates and mars  
The chambers of the sky, and up the forest floor  
Blows blossoms ravished from the flowering field.

## TO A CHILD FALLING ASLEEP

Over the dim edge of sleep I lean,  
And in her eyes' illimitable grey distances  
Look down into the shadow-tinted space—  
The cloudy air of sleep—  
To see the rose-lit petal of a Child's fair soul  
Seek dreamily the farther gloom,  
Where waking eyes may follow her no more.

One more last time her lids are lifted,  
And in her look I read a wistful fare-thee-well ;  
Her spirit waves a twinkling white hand,  
Her bark is out upon the sea of dream—  
The calm, grey sea, full and immoveably established,  
That drinks the river of my love, without o'erflowing,  
Nor ever gives my image back to me.

When o'er the sun-swept land  
Murmuring twilight spread her dusky tent,  
A Stranger passed before our friendly sun,—  
Between the dark and dawn—  
A Stranger whom we love but never see.  
And as she came and cast her blue benignant shadow  
    over all,  
She set a silver trumpet to her lips,  
And blew a note that thrilled in Children's hearts ;  
Because in little hearts the echo-fairies love to play  
Roaming the scented meadows there,



Where Love has been and sown the amaranthine  
flowers,  
Out of whose pristine cups are born the singing stars.

And as the first free rainbow bubble fled,  
Launched by the Stranger with the silver pipe  
Upon the listening air,  
As first the hollow note  
Kissed the sweet lips and died of too great happiness,  
The little Child unfurled her sails.

I stood there on the very verge of sleep,  
And called to her,  
And Love's own self had deigned to dwell within my  
heart,  
(Because I kept it always fit for Childish guests)  
And would have given welcome had she stayed.  
But then I saw the eyelids close,  
And knew that Azrael who watched her soul's white  
way,  
Had shut the gates lest I should see  
More than my life could bear.

Yet I had seen her go,  
And sight no more could hold of Beauty's wine.  
I had seen the fair face flush,  
As the soft curtains of the tinted west  
Are drawn before the temple of the night,  
When the day-worn sun has passed within;  
Had seen the little body, whitely gowned,

Folded within its nest ;  
Had caught the last light kiss  
Before the lips lay still ;  
And I had looked into the cool grey deep,  
Where Sleep received the rose-leaf soul of her,  
And bore it out upon her gentle waters.

Into the night I passed,  
Where on the mellow bosom of the west,  
Floated the flame-lit shell of Hesperus ;  
And as I stayed with hallowed breath,  
The soul of fire fell over the rim of night.  
And then I knew the soul of her I loved  
Had heard the last clear call,  
The low Elysian chant of Hesperus,  
And loving me had borne the love I gave,  
Out and beyond and over all the ends of earth,  
And where the altar flame of Venus burned,  
Had laid the gift and breathed her Childhood's prayer.

## THE CROWD

I moved amongst a concourse crushing,  
And everywhere I looked faces pressed upon me ;  
Their eyes did not look at me,  
They were staring to see what I myself was seeing.  
They did not see me, they moved upon and over me ;  
And I was afraid.  
Many feet were upon me and the eyes were not seeing  
me ;  
The feet did not feel me.  
And I sank beneath the flood,  
Bodies flowed over me ;  
And I sank yet deeper, and sinking, I died.

I died into passion,  
Into sea beneath sea of stagnant passion—  
Passion of possession, passion of envy, passion of lust,  
Passion of power, passion of sensing,  
Passion of the crowd seeing nothing ;  
And this was Hell.

Then there was peace,  
And I walked alone in a little park ;  
And beyond on the paling primrose of the west  
A cool star clung,  
One drop of golden rain upon the window glass of  
night.  
And as I moved, I saw, like a spider crawling,  
A tree of many boughs tangle the star and let it free.

And I thought :  
Humanity is a starry tear to Heaven falling,  
And like that star,  
It seems a moving net of passions tangle it,  
But only seems.

## THE LAUGHTER OF THE WORLD

My eyes saw not the ground,  
The grey silence of thought immured me ,  
I went on, yet dwelt I in abiding ;  
When up from the neutral earth beneath my feet  
There gleamed the lowly smiling of a flower.  
Loud within the cloister of my mind,  
So vastly arched and so austere silent,  
A great mirth echoed.  
I shook with dread ;  
I turned and sought within my templed mind,  
I measured all its dim profundities,  
I scanned its firmamental heights,  
But found no one.  
Nor did the laughter trespass on my peace again,  
Till I came forth from out my temple.  
Then I was bewildered,  
And questioned with dazed eyes the world about me,  
And saw on every side  
The shafts of humor couched against me.  
I saw the sun, blazing with mirth, in Heaven throned ;  
I saw the trees humorously a-quiver,  
And the hills smiling broadly,  
And the lowly flower pealing like a Child.  
All were laughing at me—  
At me, the thinker—  
And their laughter was One.

## THE PINE-TREE

When the sky is grey and the body of light is veiled,  
And the luminous shadow of Death spreads silvery  
cool over the earth,  
And hushed footfalls of rest are fleet in the garment  
of rain,  
The priestly spirit of the pine fares forth from the  
secret portals.  
Almost I see him, but tremble even lest I should,  
For then would the savor of life depart,  
And the earth of my vision be smitten with the doom  
of the frozen moon,  
Did immortal sight once shatter the blindness of mor-  
tality.  
But when the blue day of resurrection is drawn over  
the mystery,  
Then the templed green porches of the pine-tree are  
shut,  
And the secret doors are hidden;  
The message of the starry needles has folded wings,  
And the rubric of the crooked branches is a dead  
language.  
Still have I glimpsed and know that near he passed me,  
For did not the green window open a little way,  
And a herald whisper through the grey veil of silence  
as it brushed me;  
And the fronded islands of the pine-tree quiver  
As a mirage on the bosom of shadowy waters?  
Having seen, I am blind.

## SIN

The eastern casements of my mind I pushed aside ;  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
Come in, thou goodly Sun! I gaily cried.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

The sun flung out a bar of gold transparent  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
That was a phantom form of virgin ore.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

But tangled in its misty folds there lay  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
An object black and noisome as decay.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

I dashed in fury at the evil thought,  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
And puffed and clutched the air in vain pursuit.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

Misshaped, it fluttered down the lofty hall,  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
Trailing its unclean track from wall to wall.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

In wild dismay I prayed to God;  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
A Voice I, trembling, heard: "Your western gate!"  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)

Full wide I swept the wedded doors upon the west,  
    (Sin walketh up and down in the world)  
And shouldered by the gust out sprawled the pest.  
    (Sin goeth to and fro)



## WAR

In gusts of wrath titanic,  
In floods of fury old,  
A nation rose in panic,  
And armies vast unrolled.

Low on the tawny prairie,  
So neutral and so stilled,  
The lines of battle wary  
Swept like a flame and killed.

Like maddened waves wind-driven,  
The marshalled men plunged on,  
Till by their anger riven,  
The live as dead were wan.

Above the awful medley  
The War-Lords wove their charm;  
As over brewing deadly  
The witches mutter harm.

Their wills like winds unpassioned  
Beat in the battle's jar,  
And with dread purpose fashioned  
The blood-red rose of war.

Nature they clove asunder,  
The brook they turned to wine ;  
Mid furious flash and thunder  
Oak fought her neighbor pine.

Men ran from men affrighted,  
A shattered multitude ;  
And left the world benighted,  
And hearts in solitude.

## A MEMORY

In some young life of long ago  
    I held you dear ;  
And that is why in one swift glance  
    We grew so near.

Sometime (the world was in its spring)  
    'Mid meadow-sweet,  
And crowds of laughing daffodils  
    About your feet,

That spring began, the summer waned,  
    And you were all  
My life, until the autumn hushed  
    Our festival.

But where or when or how it was,  
    I cannot tell ;  
Only a silvery voice from where  
    All memories dwell,

Breathes faintly, haunts this waking dream,  
    And drifts away ;  
I can but guess the rest to be  
    Some old sweet play.

You are a child and more shall see  
    In Life's dim glass ;  
Yet once we loved, and once again  
    Our love will pass.

## WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN TOGETHER

When you were a child,  
And I was a child,  
And we were children together;  
We'd idle and play  
In the spacious day,  
Adrift on the summer weather.

And we tossed our world  
As the earth is whirled  
In the play of the solar power;  
And time was the toy  
Of this girl and this boy,  
And the flight of the years was an hour.

And only now  
Am I conscious how  
We have gone on growing older;  
Were we growing then  
In that golden glen,  
Or does craven Time wax bolder?

We will hide our youth  
In a secret booth  
Of the Palace of Loving Laughter;  
For there's naught to fear  
From the robber, Year,  
On the Isle of the Ever-After.

## TO BETTY IN A BLUE FROCK

If I were a chicory flower—  
Sown of cerulean fire  
Of Vega, to sway o'er the grass—  
And were mindful of meed to the higher,  
I would bow to your starry power  
As near me you pass.  
But I'm only a poet and lover,  
With words; and the wings of light  
That over your hair waft and hover,  
Blue-bright,  
Shame my word-love,  
Poor gift to so gay  
A sweet little spark of the glancing  
Star-ray.  
So if of my song you are chancing  
To tire,  
Just list to the bird-love,  
A-lilting from grass and from flower,  
From cerulean chicory flower,  
With star-light afire,  
That bends to your astral power  
From Vega astray.

LENTO  
[*To Betty and Ellen*]

Two children      walking.

So slow their walk,  
So like a sleepy wind their talk—

Arm sagging at the other's waist,  
Close as leaves fallen on wet grass—

Their slippers follow oily waves of heat,  
Lazy as gorged fishes,  
Lazy as minutes  
Swimming in the silence of an empty house  
In midsummer—

The drifting yellow ashes of the sun  
cover their hair—

So slow they are  
The drowsy seconds settle on their shoulders  
and fold wings—

And one small footstep      sings  
To the next one  
A lullaby—

The hours wait them      at the gate,  
Sighing  
As the little feet      tick by

## THE CHILD SEEN FROM A WINDOW

Sweet little one,  
In crystal calm withheld;  
The wind fondles so tenderly your curls of mellow  
brown,  
And kisses your olive cheek,  
And stirs your silken frock.  
Oh, little one,  
From the eternal spring my love is welling,  
And winds about your heart, a pleasant river;  
Rest upon its banks, little one,  
Beneath the leaning coolness of the tremulous green  
trees.  
Do you feel the light caressing of the wind?  
It is my love reaching out to you.  
Do you hear the mirthful voices of the waves?  
Then you hear my words of love.  
Do you see ripe tanned cheeks of your little mates?  
Then you see me, your lover.  
For though I only sit and look,  
It is with their silent love, I love you.

## A WINTER-WALK WITH BARBY

There among the withered grasses,  
While the winter daylight passes,  
    Barby stood ;  
Blue eyes mild with wistful pleading,  
On my open heart a-reading  
    That I would  
Swing her in my arms and bear her,  
On my breast would proudly wear her,  
As a priest of Childhood should.

Was the tangled path too narrow,  
Did the stiffened branches harrow,  
    Barby dear?  
Standing there with look beseeching,  
Little hands to mine upreaching—  
    What, a tear !  
Come aloft, my little maiden,  
With your precious beauty laden,  
I can keep away the fear.

If I lift you out of places  
Low and toilsome, till our faces  
    Cheek by cheek,  
Both look down upon the trouble,  
On the winter-weeds and stubble,  
    And the reek  
Off the snow-wet earth a-rising,  
Is it past all shrewd surmising  
Which of us is weak?



Barby, it is I who need you,  
Barby, 'tis not I who lead you,  
    You lead me ;  
I am toiling in the lowly  
Tangled pathways, groping slowly,  
    Painfully ;  
I am weary of the duty,  
Lift me to your height of Beauty,  
Where the wings of us are free !

## TO BOBBY, BEING SEVEN

Bobby being seven,  
At dawn I raised my eyes,  
To see my Father's mansion,  
Bedecked for her surprise.  
Never was airy lawn so blue,  
By sun so royal spanned ;  
Never did wind so gracious, strew  
Cloud-shadows on the land.  
The earth was bright with morning,  
The leaves, in spring-time play,  
Despite November's warning,  
Skipped to the flutes of day ;  
And out of many a moon-dim place,  
Isled in the inmost Heaven,  
The Night had plucked some shining grace  
For Bobby,—being seven.

## THE WATER-FRONT

On the checker-board  
Sky squares and water squares—

Tipsy tugs,  
pert stacks,  
queening at the dock...

On the checker-board  
Black sea,  
White sky,  
kissing corners...

Slow steam squirms,  
eludes the air...

Oh the salty little clams.  
Sniffing!

## A CHRISTMAS TOAST

(To be read in the absence of the poet, by any poet's  
mother)

Fill up your glasses, friends, and stand,  
And when you've filled them all, fill yet one more  
Full to the brim,  
As he would like to be,  
Whose hand  
Has often helped you spill the wine before ;  
Whose Christmas spree,  
While you are clashing cup and tongue with Yule-tide  
    vim,  
Is one of lone sobriety,  
Since there's no fun  
In getting full just one by one.  
So open wide the door  
And toast the vacancy.

Fill all your glasses, for the grape is dead,  
The purple-coated grape, who, fat and sweet,  
Mid air-swept shadows of the vine did hide ;  
The prosperous grape is dead.  
He waxed from green to purple splendor,  
Lavish rain and sun did render  
Homage to his viny feet.  
And then he died ;  
His purple paled to amber yellow,  
His sweetness ran more rich and mellow,  
And in this bottled bliss his virtues multiplied.

So pass from one to all the brimming bowl,  
And drink the noble grape,—his very soul.

Fill up your glasses, friends, and drink  
To him who on a distant border of the map  
Is fast impaled ;  
In sundry ways he's poor but rich in this,  
In being born upon the Muse's lap.  
(You know the one, she's reading now, I think)  
So though by borrowed blessings of the day regaled,  
He yet can lend to you his all,  
Who lives in rhyme a better life  
Than ever he can live in deed ;  
As does the grape that hung upon the wall,  
When fully freed,  
Its soul survives in glory of the wine.  
So with these words of mine.  
Then fill your glasses, friends, and drink with me ;  
In wine and rhyme the grape and I are free !

## TO ONE IN DEATH

Before the spirit fled that night,  
On lifting wings of fire,  
She breathed upon her fallen mate  
One last warm earth-desire;

Leaving a prayer for sweet repose,  
And lovely dreams awhile;  
And on the lips of ashen-rose  
The flower of a smile.

## THE SNAKE PASSES

Three little children afoot in the grass ;  
Getting rich in daisies,  
Clutching red burdens of clover,  
Playing at rivalry  
With skeltering flocks of mad blossoms,  
Mirth-shaken, flung by the whisk of the wings  
Of the tipseying wind  
Into the hands of the children.

*Three pennies        falling,  
And lost in the grass . . .  
Three flushed children,  
Panting        covetous,  
Pulling the grass apart ;*

*Withering flowers trampled by the feet  
of little beasts.*

*A sullen boy with two pennies  
Clenched in his grimy fist ;  
And a little girl        crying,  
And one stunned with disappointment.*

So I did not throw the pennies,  
But passed,  
And after me fell as rain ceasing,  
The dropping spray of cool voices,  
And silvery flecks of tone  
Of the grass,  
Parted by children in play.

## THE MOON'S SONG

Sleep, a tiny new-born rose,  
Loves the South-wind sprite;  
All its folded leaves uncloset  
When I climb the height  
Of the sloping twilight sky.  
Sleep 's a rose  
That doth uncloset  
When shadows fly  
On pale blue wing,  
And passing, sing  
The love-spell of my magic gleam;  
All its rose-pink leaves unfold,  
So reveal the heart of gold,  
Rose-heart of dream.



## MY SELF

MY SELF—

And swamp-lights cooling the gloom about me,  
Leaping lights in the pools of shadow,  
Sweet lights of stars snapping the pods of darkness,  
Searing flashes of pleasure ridging the flesh of the  
night;

And My Self

In the midst,

Alone. . .

Alone, and cold,

When, clucking the glory of God,

Silently steals near the Mother

And crowds the cold away;

In her sensuous warmth I smother,

And opens the Way!

The Way of the Word to be born,

Born of me,

The globular whiteness.

Soothingly close around me the feathers of Life;

Defying the freezing assaults of Nothingness,

Hiding me from importunate hands that would break  
me.

Oh, prying ones,

Know that the mystery within me is dead to you, that  
the seeking hammers of conceit kill as they strike,  
and that my mystery will never be born but to die  
to Eternity, just beyond and ever beyond your  
questioning blind eyes.

Into your shells, you seekers,  
And wait        for the Secret,  
But look not upon It,  
For I,  
My Self,  
Am the ovum of God's last word,  
That was His first,  
And will never be spoken.  
Listen!  
MY SELF

## DUST TO DUST

Earth will have its own,  
Yes, for Death deals the law ;  
Lay me in waves for a green winding sheet,  
Crown me with stone with a stone at my feet,  
Yet will my heavy shroud lower me down,  
Yet will earth and my body meet.  
Earth will have its own.

Earth will have its own.  
What will bear me so high ;  
Though stars stare around me out of the dark,  
And the Earth is a dull coal below in the dark?  
Yet through dark will the dust of my body fall,  
Yet will earth and my body meet.  
Earth will have its own.

## TO A MASTER-MARINER

Time's waves toss high, and winds eternal blow  
Upon our sails set to our will's intent;  
From ports of home diurnally we go,  
And to our hearths at even-tide our prows are bent.  
So every day we fare to unknown isles,  
Mid tides that cross and twist our clear-thought plan;  
And some on dread sea-changes drift, and whiles  
Odysseus ploughs the churning hours,—a Man!  
Such a stout sailor of the days art thou.  
'Tis eighty years since to the bubbled edge  
The Mother-Love your tiny shell did vow,  
And broke upon your launching life her pledge.  
Eighty tall ships ride homeward to her soul,  
Weighed with the love you've spent to make men  
whole.

## A WARNING FROM THE HEART

Do you love me for what I wish to be  
More than for what I am? If that is so  
Stay in my life, I would not have you go ;  
We shall be sail-mates on the unknown sea.  
But if, used to this sultry bay, unfree  
To ride the wind, to fly with winged snow,  
You in your passion's pocket hide our vow,  
My shell is yours but not the meat of me.

I cannot stay and live, I cannot die in flight ;  
If I must live alone then I must choose  
Which of two precious things I am to lose,  
To stifle in your heart, or wing my way to light.  
Now I have said and will be ever yours ;  
Bar all your shutters, bolt your iron doors.

## THE VISION OF ONE WHO DOUBTED

They came and told me she was ill,  
But I did not listen for I doubted  
That Beauty like to hers could be so mortal.  
I sat in silence of the flowers till the evening  
Shook over me an azure shroud,  
And then a voice :

*Come, said my love to me, Come,  
And I will give you my beauty,  
My secret in tenderness closed  
From the wistful wish in your eyes.*  
I followed in trembling haste  
After the whispering fret  
Of her feet in the grass,  
Out into loneliness,  
Companioned alone by the manifold loveliness  
Of her whom I loved.

The world dropped from us into its murmuring pit,  
And the stars streaked the night  
With swift falling threads of bright pain,  
As she led me ;  
While the air blew thin on my heart,  
And my heart was still as a pool that hears  
Only the beating of song  
In the throat of one small bird  
That spills the laughter of Death,  
And quenches the thirst of the living.

I listened  
To her feet cleaving a path through the night;  
And as we went higher into the wood,  
The shadows of leaves  
Stole crumb by crumb the brightness  
That pebbled her hair,  
Like grains of soft gold in the bed of a brook.

More fast than her feet,  
The pursuing feet of the Night  
Shod in sandals of starlight,—  
The Night, made immortally young after throes  
With the Angel of day  
Joined us, silently striding,  
Crowded close to the swaying fragrance  
Of her,  
So that I hurried, but vainly, to reach her.

*This is the place, I think.*

She was stayed in the clasp of the Night,  
And only her voice  
Was with me there in the house of the shadow.

*This is the place I have seen  
Only in dream; do not speak,  
Or I cannot remember.*

I spoke not, but my heart  
Strove wildly as ever a rabbit

Thrashed in the claws of a trap ;  
For there, under the surface of darkness  
She lay as still as one drowning,  
Warning me not to save her.

I could not see what she did,  
But as if by a gesture of one pale hand or the other,  
A gray ghost of light  
Lifted the smothering shadow,  
And revealed a wan face,  
And made plain but amazing the shut eyes of the wood.  
It was enough that once I could see her,  
Though but for a moment,  
In the gaping black jaws of a cavern ;  
That once her frail hands  
Fluttered as flowers tossed  
On the low singing breath of the south,  
And scattered drops of their fragrance ;  
It was enough that her closing eyes saw me,  
Then were blinded by sleep,  
And she was gone in a dream.  
But I stayed alone with the moon,  
Who watched me.

After immeasurable pauses  
In the slow flight of the moon,  
From afar came a vision  
Of One who ran swiftly beyond the horizon,  
Over the frontier of death,



To the fields where the stars slip their tether and live  
    in glad races,  
And I heard a voice calling :

*This way I am dreaming,  
Follow, follow, follow!*

I hastened to dream, and long and long I went dream-  
    ing,  
Till before me,  
Familiar as pitch of the roof on the sky  
Bent over the home that one seeks  
In the maze of the night,  
Yawned the silent stiff lips of a cavern.  
Loud as the horn that hangs at the hips of a hunter  
I uttered her name, once and twice,  
Again I gave voice to the magic,  
Then the secret veil beyond vision was caught by a  
    wind and lifted,  
By a wind that dashed out of its lair in the rock ;  
And I saw her waiting in smiles  
For my blindness to end.  
And as tiring maid to her glory  
A Star came out of the cavern,  
And folded nine mantles of silver about her,  
Falling in dazzling plumage of blue to her feet ;  
Darted from her hair and her face in luminous  
    splinters ;  
Broke in spangles of star-dust over the mould of her  
    beauty ;

Leaped from the rosy tips of her fingers ;  
And lay in unfathomable brightness,  
An astral pool on her forehead,  
Between, but more dim than, her eyes.

That night she died, they said.  
But I did not hear.  
The path was plain,  
The path I had suffered.

## MAUVE

The rhythm of the sea  
Is blent in undulations of gray satin;  
The ashes of burned violets drift  
over a sky;  
And blurred,  
a magical seed of light  
Breaks in the whorls of a strange flower.  
Did you ever see a flower  
With core of tarnished silver  
and five black petals?









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